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Dee Carstensen to Perform at IWU's Blue Moon Coffeehouse Dec. 5

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Dee Carstensen closes the fall season as headliner at the next Blue Moon Coffeehouse at Illinois Wesleyan University. The free concert, which is open to the public, will be at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 5 in the Main Lounge of IWU's Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University St.

Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and flavored coffees and light pastries will be available.

Carstensen brings to the Blue Moon a sophisticated ensemble sound that deftly fuses pop to folk with soulful touches of jazz and rock. Her chosen instrument — an 85-pound 47-stringed harp — is rarely seen in a contemporary pop setting or heard outside of stuffy chamber music halls or New Age environs. Carstensen uses it in a guitar-like way — to stunning effect.

Her polished compositions, with highly personal lyrics exuding wit and wisdom, and delivery put her in league with Joni Mitchell, Shawn Colvin and Rickie Lee Jones. She writes smart, complex songs about love, relationships and searching for fulfillment with the authority of one who has been there.

Carstensen is touring in promotion of her latest CD, "The Map," featuring an upbeat, contemporary sound. The CD was released last spring on the Exit Nine label, distributed by Blue Thumb Records/Universal Distribution.

More About Dee Carstensen

Having begun piano lessons at age five, Carstensen took up the harp at age eight, studying at the Eastman School of Music as part of an experimental group for children. She studied there for nine years while simultaneously developing a broad range of musical tastes and a passion for pop songwriters which included such greats as James Taylor, Carole King, Janis Joplin, Elton John and especially Joni Mitchell.

Although her Eastman instructor had hopes of her going on to the conservatory, Dee wandered off to find her tortured soul as a songwriter. She traveled through Europe and then spent a number of years in Montana and California immersed in the darker aspects of her life which she describes as "my journey to hell and back." Carstensen's experiences fueled her work, and as a woman who had seen many facets of life, she developed a unique, very real vantage point as an artist and lyricist. Her move to New York City became the catalyst that introduced her extraordinary talents to the world.

"Beloved One," her first release, which featured Mark Knopfler, introduced Carstensen as a major songwriter and vocalist, and helped land her music in indie films and the sci-fi TV show "VR-5." The next

release, "Regarding the Soul," produced by Sting and Dire Straits producer Neil Dorfsman, captured the clarity and purity of Carstensen's live performance, presenting her within an acoustic setting, and allowing the intoxicating marriage of her voice and harp to take hold.

Carstensen has been receiving a lot of attention for her unique ability to blend the harp with her openly emotional songwriting and warmly expressive lyrics. Carstensen makes the harp work for her the same way other singer/songwriters use a guitar, and she has expanded the possibilities of this virtually "unheard of" instrument to a point where she can cover Jimi Hendrix's "Angel" and, in the process, create a distinct new channel for the modern traditions of folk and rock.

Carstensen has been touring both solo and with her 'acoustic trio' at established clubs, theatres and festivals, sharing the bill with Janis Ian, Sinead O'Connor, Hall & Oates, and Alison Krauss. She also played harp for Vance Gilbert's "Shaking Off Gravity" project. Gilbert is a perennial Blue Moon Coffeehouse favorite who will make a return engagement in February 1999.

About The Blue Moon Coffeehouse

The Blue Moon Coffeehouse has been bringing free acoustic music concerts to the campus of Illinois Wesleyan and the Bloomington-Normal, Ill., community since 1992. For more information, call the Blue Moon Concert Infoline at (309) 556-3815 and to join the mailing list or send a comment, e-mail address is bluemoon@titan.iwu.edu.

Previous Blue Moon Coffeehouse performer have included Ani DiFranco, Carrie Newcomer, IWU graduates Al and Andi Tauber, and the Sons of the Never Wrong.

About Illinois Wesleyan University

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. Since 1994, the following facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching rates Illinois Wesleyan a "Baccalaureate I" institution, a classification that places it among 159 highly-selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive +" in its latest edition.